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ABSTRACT

A study examined the competence of English teachers in an Anglophone country (Nigeria) and the types of classroom interaction in a Nigerian university. Subjects, 240 randomly selected first-year undergraduates who registered for a Use of English course, were divided into an experimental and a control group. The experimental group was taught by two teachers randomly selected from the 12 formally trained teachers in the Use of English program. The control group was taught by two of the other 48 teachers who had never been exposed to any pedagogic education in communication skills in English. Both groups were administered a reading comprehension pre- and post-test and were taught for 6 weeks using the same syllabus. Classroom interactions were observed and coded. Results indicated that: (1) the experimental class made far more moves than the control class; (2) the experimental students made more moves than their teacher, but the control teachers made more moves than their control students; (3) media utilization was 61.09% (students) and 11.38% (teachers) for experimental classes and 16.2% (teachers) and 9.19% (students) for control classes; (4) experimental teachers were rated 84.5% while control teachers were rated 34% on five performance categories; and (5) experimental students scored much better on the posttest than the control students. Findings suggest that teaching competence is an important factor in the inculcation of communication competence and is a product of an adequate teacher education program. (Three tables and one figure of data are included.) (RS)

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The Role of Teaching Competence in Effective Reading Comprehension Within the Use of English Programme in a Nigerian University.

Aim:

This paper examines the role of teaching competence as a variable in Language educational processes. In particular, it looks at teaching competence in respect of Reading Comprehension (RC) in English in a tertiary institution in a representative Third World Anglophone country.

In this paper, teaching competence shall be conceived as the teacher's intuitive or imaginative utilization of a systematic body of knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate the effective achievement by learners of whatever is regarded as the target learning goal through appropriate interactions both among themselves and between them and their teacher, principally in, and secondarily outside, the classroom. In this sense, teaching competence is the sum of three principal activities: (a) the internalization of a systematic body of knowledge, skills and attitudes, (b) appropriate utilization of what has been internalised in teaching/learning situations and (c) the efficient attainment of the target learning goals. That is why for this paper, teaching competence is the outcome of undergoing effective educational processes by the teacher formally and informally, preservice and inservice and on-the job. What is more, the desired systematic body of knowledge, skills and attitudes must be clearly identified for any given situation.

Consequently, this paper seeks to present and analyze data on RC classroom interactions in a university with three specific objectives. First, it is to identify the various kinds of classroom interactions that can promote the efficient acquisition of the RC productive skills. Next, an attempt is made to pinpoint those things that a teacher must do in order to generate classroom interactions that will promote optimum teaching and learning of RC processes. Finally, the manner of promoting desired positive RC activities in a Third World tertiary institution particularly a university is outlined. Thus, this paper presents a three-pronged analysis of the sort of education demanded by the RC teacher for optimum effectiveness in a Third World Anglophone university.

Rationale for the Study

At least five factors can be identified as responsible for the enormous difficulties which most Third World Anglophone countries experience in the teaching and learning of English language competence. First, because of the influence of the mother tongue in such countries, the forum for the systematic practice and use of English is restricted to the formal setting in the classroom (Onukaogu, 1989). Secondly, the unique features of bilingualism or even multilingualism in such Third World Anglophone countries demand a special philosophy and process of English Language Teaching (ELT). Thirdly, the scarcity of English Language teachers all over the world makes it extremely difficult to recruit the required specialist manpower for ELT. Besides, the poor economies of such countries hinder the utilization of textbooks and other realia that could enhance the teaching and learning of English. Finally, to further compound the

problems that plague ELT in Third World Anglophone countries, the countries do not seem to have the political will to evolve and implement robust language policies that cater for the effective and efficient teaching of the indigenous mother tongues and English Language (Afolayan, 1984).

Given the enormous problems which plague ELT in Third World Anglophone States, the teaching and learning of English language at the Pretertiary levels are so bastardised that entrants to tertiary institutions which are English-medium do not have the competence for receiving and giving information in English (Wigzel, R., 1983). In addition, in all the levels of the School system, little or no provision is made for the efficient and effective training of English Language teachers. For instance, in Nigerian universities no pedagogic education is provided those teaching Use of English (UOE) - a compulsory communicative skills course for all 1st year undergraduates. Indeed in some Nigerian universities irrespective of whether or not one studied English Language in the university, any university teacher or Post graduate student can be readily recruited to teach UOE.

The practice of allowing personnels who have not acquired proven teaching competence in English Language Communicative Skills to teach UOE is counter intuitive. After all, even in countries like Britain and the United States where English is a mother tongue, only persons with proven teaching competence in communicative skills are employed to teach English For Academic Purposes (EAP) or College ESL, the equivalent of the UOE course. Significantly, there is abundant evidence to validate that the products of the UOE course do not show any reasonable evidence of having attained the required communicative competence in English. This fact seems to have called to serious

question the teaching competence of those recruited to teach UOE (James, in Press).

There is no doubt that of the many factors which hinder the successful attainment of UOE goals and objectives, teaching competence could be one. There is therefore the need to ascertain the role of teaching competence in the enhancement of the effective and efficient acquisition of communicative competence in English Language For Academic Purposes in Third World Anglophone States. For the purpose of this paper, Communicative Competence is a

> *system of processes which makes possible the interpreting, structuring and restructuring of communication messages to meet the needs of an infinite number of communication environments* (James, in Press)

Research Questions

This study seeks more specifically to find answers to the following questions: (a) Does the UOE teacher have the teaching competence that will enable him to initiate, sustain and manage result and goal-oriented interactions in the RC classroom? (b) What are the types of classroom interactions which the UOE teacher must initiate, sustain and manage in order to facilitate learning and teaching? (c) Is it possible for the UOE teacher to enhance the RC performance of his students through the manipulation of classroom interactions?

Research Hypotheses

In order to find answers to the above questions, the following hypotheses shall inform this study:

(a) The number of classroom interactions in the RC lesson taught by a personnel who has RC teaching competence will be more than those taught by a personnel who does not have teaching competence.

(b) The varieties of classroom interactions in the RC lesson taught by a personnel who has teaching competence will not be more than those taught by a personnel not having teaching competence.

(c) There will be no significant differences between the scores in a RC test of students taught by personnels who have teaching competence and those who do not have.

Research Procedure

The following design:

O^1 X O^2 (Experimental Class)

O^3 X O^4 (Control Class)

R ----->

informed the study where x is the treatment (instructional intervention) given to both groups; O^1 and O^3 are Pretest Observation of both groups and O^2, O^4 are Posttest observation of the groups. R represents a random sampling of the population.

Subjects:

Two groups of students were involved. The first group is made up of 120 randomly selected first year undergraduates who registered for the UOE course in the Faculties of Law and Arts. This is the experimental group. The second group is also made up of 120 randomly

selected first year undergraduates who also registered for the UOE course in the Faculties of Law and Arts. This is the control group.

Two teachers were randomly selected from the twelve formally trained teachers in the UOE programme. Together with the experimental group, they constituted the experimental classes. The teachers were selected to teach the experimental group RC. The experimental teachers had previously participated in British Council Summer Schools in English For Specific Purposes (ESP). In addition, they had also participated in the British Council and the Nigerian Universities Commission sponsored Communication Skills Project - COMSKIP. COMSKIP aims at enabling participating teachers to acquire teaching competence in the teaching of communication skills. Participants at the Summer Schools and COMSKIP workshops were exposed and drilled in the utilization of Collaborative Student learning and teaching, the effective management of large classes, the assessment of students' needs, syllabus and course design, integrative language teaching through the utilization of the 4P's teaching model, Operation of Self Access learning methodology and the analysis and utilization of classroom interactions for optimum learning. Apart from the training on the above skills which relied heavily on Thomas' (1988) model on pedagogic competence for Communicative Skills teachers, each participant had competence in English language, since each had a first degree in English Language.

Two of the other 48 UOE teachers who had never been exposed to any pedagogic education in Communication Skills in English were randomly selected to teach RC to the Control group. Together with the students, they constituted the Control class. This group of teachers like the experimental teachers had English Language competence since they all had a first degree in English Language.

Instruments:

A RC test was administered as Pretest to both groups of students. Both groups were then taught RC for a period of six weeks. The same syllabus was used for both groups during the instructional intervention. At the end of the instructional intervention, the RC test was readministered as Posttest to both groups.

During the period of the instructional intervention, the interactions in the classrooms of both groups of students were observed and coded using a Classroom Interaction Observation Schedule (CIOS). The CIOS is a two matrix schedule which provides for coding both teacher and students' interaction during the lesson. It is Ezeokoli's (1989) adaptation of Fanselow's (1977) FOCUS - FOCI for Observing Communication in Used Setting. It makes use of Flander's (1970) four move categories - Structure, Solicit, Respond and React. Table 1 shows 49 of the medium use categories which were identified during the Pilot study for this research. The CIOS matrix had three other important features. First, it provides for the content or purpose of each move. Secondly, it provides for the type of media - spoken, written etc. - utilized in each move. Finally, it provides for group dynamics. That is whether a move is initiated by or involved the individual, the group or entire class. After trial codings, the CIOS was found to have a high reliability index of 0.8119 (intracoder). In addition to the coding, the performance of the teachers during the RC lesson was rated by means of the Royal Society of Arts Classroom Teacher Assessment Checklist (CTAC).

Research Findings

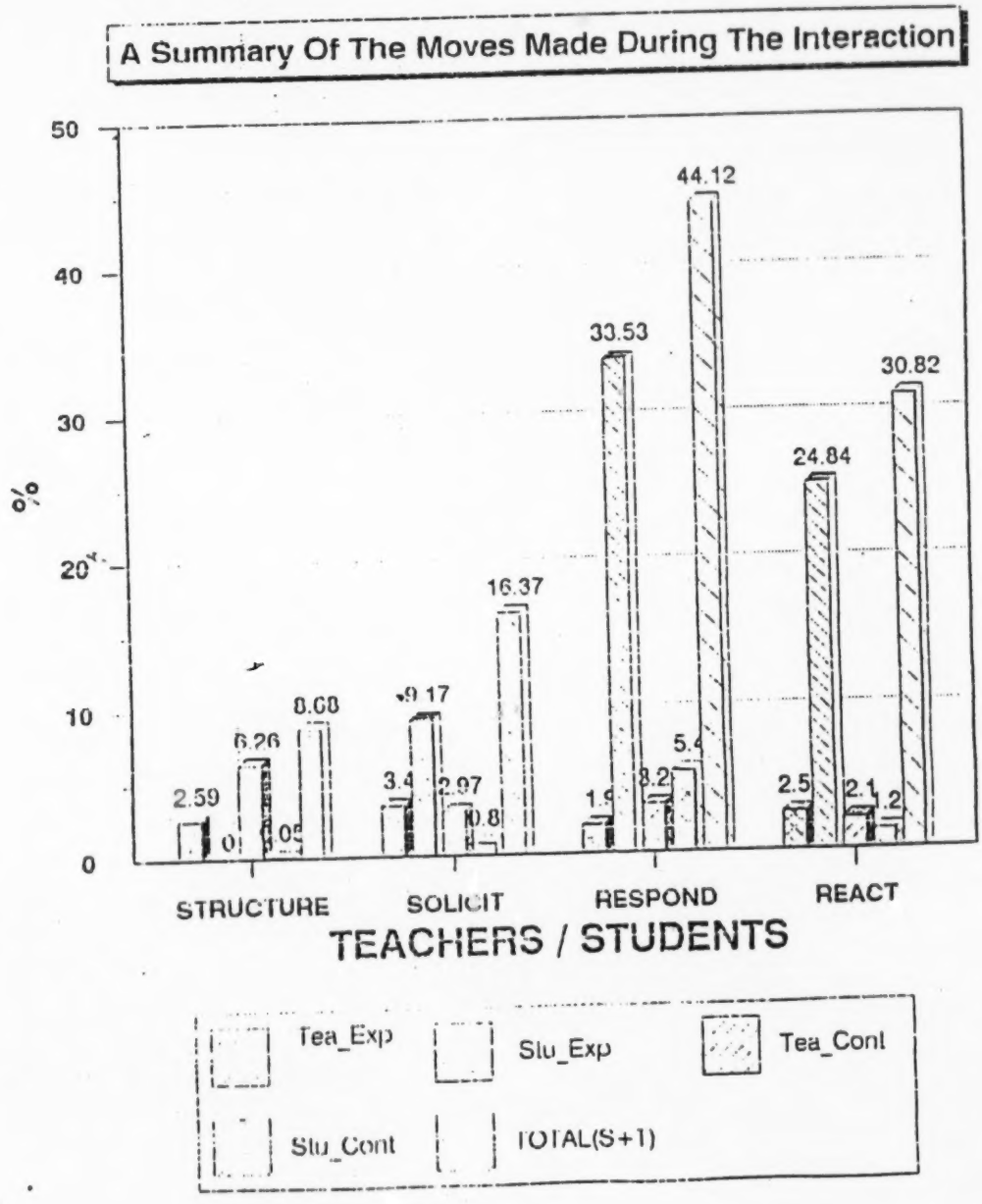

Fig 1

Classroom Interactions

As Fig. 1 shows, all four of Flanders Interaction Move categories - Structure, Solicit, Respond and React - were utilised during the RC lesson. The data show that the experimental class makes far more moves than the control class. Secondly, while the experimental students make more moves than their teachers, it is the control teachers who in contrast make more moves than their control students.

Table 1

A Summary of the Medium Use

	Experimental Group				Control Group				Total		
	Teachers		Students		Teachers		Students				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
											S
											T
SUM	41	1.04	-	-	32	0.81	2	.051			R
STARTER	24	0.61	-	-	4	0.10	-	-			U
READ	14	0.35	-	-	14	0.35	-	-	349	8.84	C
LECTURE	11	0.28	-	-	185	4.69	-	-			T
OVERVIEW	12	0.30	-	-	10	0.25	-	-			U
											R
											E
NOMINATE	12	0.30	11	0.28	6	0.15	-	-			S
QUESTION	31	0.79	10	0.25	35	0.89	-	-			O
DIRECT	37	0.94	-	-	18	0.46	-	-			L
COMMAND	20	0.51	-	-	12	0.30	-	-	645	16.35	I
REQUEST	12	0.30	24	0.61	8	0.20	-	-			C
READ W	5	0.13	105	2.66	4	0.10	32	0.81			I
READ P	17	0.43	212	5.37	34	0.86	-	-			T
IMAGINE	1	0.03	32	0.81	-	-	-	-			
DISAGREE	9	0.23	44	1.12	-	-	-	-			
ILLUSTRATE	29	0.73	86	2.18	12	0.30	-	-			
DEFINE	-	-	40	1.01	-	-	25	0.63			
INFER	1	0.03	176	4.46	-	-	2	0.051			
WRITE	4	0.10	157	3.98	60	1.52	101	2.56			
REPEAT	9	0.23	-	-	-	-	-	-			R
READ	9	0.23	27	0.68	-	-	2	0.051			E
EVALUATE	-	-	148	3.75	-	-	-	-			S
SYNTHESIZE	2	0.051	175	4.43	-	-	-	-			P
COMPARE	7	0.18	73	1.85	-	-	-	-	1738	44.04	O

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APPLY	-	-	60	1.52	-	-	62	1.57				N
GENERALISE	-	-	5	0.13	-	-	1	0.03				D
CORRECT	5	0.13	24	0.61	14	0.35	-	-				
CRITICISE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
INTERPRETE	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.051				
SOCIATE	-	-	83	2.10	20	0.51	18	0.46				
EXPLAIN	-	-	131	3.32	21	0.53	-	-				
INTERPRETE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
GENERALISE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
QUESTION	-	-	35	0.89	-	-	-	-				
INFORM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
PRESENT	3	0.08	23	0.58	-	-	-	-				
EXPLAIN	4	0.10	28	0.71	-	-	-	-				
QUESTION	-	-	11	0.28	-	-	-	-				
CORRECT	-	-	16	0.41	-	-	-	-				
APPROVE	-	-	3	0.08	-	-	-	-				
COMPARE	-	-	186	4.71	-	-	-	-				
CHECK	18	0.46	5	0.13	-	-	14	0.35				R
ACKNOWLEDGE	4	0.10	19	0.48	4	0.10	-	-				E
REPLY	8	0.20	117	2.47	7	0.18	2	0.051				A
ILLUSTRATE	7	0.18	-	-	-	-	-	-	1214	30.77		C
EVALUATE P	-	-	106	2.69	6	0.15	-	-				T
EVALUATE T	2	0.051	124	3.14	1	0.03	-	-				
REJECT	28	0.71	71	1.80	30	0.76	-	-				
ASIDE	7	0.18	-	-	15	0.38	-	-				
REPEAT	9	0.23	-	-	-	-	-	-				
QUERY	13	0.33	219	5.55	-	-	-	-				
UNCLASSIF-												
IABLE	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	0.20				
SOCIATE	-	-	75	1.89	20	0.51	27	0.68				
TOTAL							=		3946	100%		

Of all the 49 medium use categories during the instructional intervention, 35 and 33 of them were made by the experimental students and teachers respectively. 14 and 24 of them were made by the control students and teachers respectively. Although qualitatively (i.e. in terms of variety) the medium use categories of both the experimental and control teachers are comparable, quantitatively it is the experimental students who make more moves than their teachers. For instance, in the Solicit, Respond and React moves, the medium use are 9.17%, 33.42% and 24.3% respectively for the students; while for the teachers it is 3.4%, 2.018% and 2.52% respectively. The reverse is what

obtains for the control group where the teachers utilise the medium use categories more than the students.

The data show that eight media - Spoken, Blackboard, Visuals, Printed text, Silence, Gestures, Tacit and Exercise book - were utilised during the lesson. The media utilization was 61.090% (students) and 11.38% (teachers) for the experimental classes. For the control classes it is 16.20% (teachers) and 9.19% (students). The data also show that a total of seven contents - Creative, Critical, Interpretive, Sentential, Literal, Vocabulary and Affixes - were specific to the moves. The trend observed in the other move utilization categories still obtains. The moves made by the experimental class has far more contents than those of the control class. It is also the experimental students whose moves have far more contents than the experimental teachers. Finally, the data provide a picture of how the class members participated during the interactions. For instance for the experimental class, 18.7% moves were made by individual students, 31.08% by groups and 18.64% by the entire class. For the control class it is 0.54%, 0.61% and 6.01% respectively.

Class Teacher Assessment

The data show that in the five classroom teacher performance categories that were observed - Lesson plan, Teaching aids, Class management, Presentation of lesson and Teacher's Personality - the experimental teachers were rated 84.5% while the control teachers were rated 34.0%. The much better performance of the experimental teachers is definitely beyond reasonable doubt.

RC Test

TABLE 2

A T-test Analysis of the Pretest x 0.05 (2 tail)

Test item	Degree of freedom	STD Deviation Expt group	STD Deviation Contr. group	Mean Score Expt group	Mean Score Contr. group	T Value	T value Calculated	Remarks
L1	238	1.878	1.906	4.1754	4.1270	1.96	0.20	NS
L2	"	2.471	2.447	2.0965	3.0556	"	-3.02	SIG
L3	"	2.511	2.507	2.500	2.380	"	0.37	NS
L4	"	1.789	1.906	0.7456	0.8730	"	-0.53	NS
L11	"	2.162	1.971	1.2281	0.9524	"	1.03	NS
L14	"	2.235	1.224	1.3596	0.3175	"	4.54	SIG
L15	"	2.135	2.060	1.1842	1.0714	"	0.42	NS
L16	"	1.698	1.069	0.6579	0.2381	"	2.31	SIG
L17	"	2.334	2.2481	1.5789	1.3889	"	0.64	NS
L18	"	2.135	2.228	1.1842	1.3492	"	-0.58	NS
L19	"	1.483	1.626	0.4825	0.5952	"	-0.56	NS
L20	"	1.283	1.150	0.3509	0.2778	"	-0.47	NS
C5	"	0.175	0.131	0.8333	0.4762	"	1.65	NS
C6	"	2.278	2.113	3.5526	3.8492	"	-1.05	NS
C7	"	2.135	2.268	3.8158	3.5714	"	0.86	NS
C8	"	2.367	2.464	3.8333	2.9762	"	1.14	NS
C9	"	2.015	1.906	3.9912	4.1270	"	-0.54	NS
C10	"	2.383	2.228	3.2895	3.6508	"	-1.21	NS
C12	"	2.492	2.493	2.8070	2.8651	"	-0.18	NS
C13	"	0.182	0.141	0.9211	0.5556	"	1.60	NS

TABLE 3

A T-test Analysis of the Posttest x 0.05 (2 tail)

Test item	Degree of freedom	STD Deviation Expt group	STD Deviation Contr. group	Mean Score Expt group	Mean Score Contr. group	T Value	T value Calculated	Remarks
L1	213	0.0	1.565	5.000	4.4554	1.96	3.72	
L2	"	0.468	2.357	4.9561	1.6337	"	14.73	
L3	"	2.015	2.407	3.9912	3.2178	"	2.56	
L4	"	2.423	1.736	1.8421	0.6931	"	3.95	
L11	"	0.468	2.197	4.9561	1.2871	"	17.40	
L14	"	1.698	0.0	4.3421	0.0	"	25.70	
L15	"	1.744	0.163	4.2982	1.3366	"	10.92	
L16	"	2.480	1.442	2.1053	0.4455	"	5.91	
L17	"	2.235	2.434	3.6404	1.8812	"	5.52	
L18	"	2.351	2.249	3.3772	1.3862	"	6.32	
L19	"	1.541	1.626	0.5268	0.5941	"	-0.31	NS
L20	"	1.910	1.811	0.8772	0.8020	"	0.30	NS
C5	"	2.569	1.090	2.4123	0.2475	"	8.02	
C6	"	0.468	1.736	4.9561	4.3069	"	3.84	
C7	"	0.0	1.837	5.0000	4.1881	"	4.72	
C8	"	2.187	2.391	3.7281	3.2673	"	1.48	NS
C9	"	0.468	1.726	4.9561	4.3069	"	3.46	
C10	"	0.0	2.296	5.0000	3.5149	"	6.91	
C12	"	0.0	2.139	5.000	3.8119	"	5.93	
C13	"	2.316	1.357	3.4649	0.3960	"	11.66	

Tables 2 and 3 present a T-test analysis of the pretest and posttest performance of the students. While the Pretest comparability of the performance of both groups is indisputable, the much better performance of the experimental group over the control at the posttest is beyond reasonable doubt.

Testing of the Hypotheses

The qualitatively and quantitatively much better moves made by the experimental class; the much better ratings of the experimental teachers and the much better posttest performance of the experimental

students, leave one with no other choice but to reject all the three hypotheses set for this study.

Implications of Research Findings

The inescapable conclusion from the data presented is that teaching competence is accountable for the much better interactions in the experimental classes, the higher ratings of the experimental teachers and the much better performance of the experimental students, since this is the only variable which distinguishes the experimental classes from the control classes.

The above conclusion has some significant implications. In the first place, it shows that teaching competence is an important factor in the inculcation of communication competence in communication skills courses in Third World Anglophone countries. Those Third World Anglophone States which do not take teaching competence into consideration in the placement of teachers in their communication skills courses, do so at grave risks to their students and to the objectives of their communication skills courses. It is doubtful whether such countries can ever

> *increase the relevance of programmes to the proven needs of students in key areas of development, particularly in Science and technology* (COMSKIP Project document, p.1)

Secondly, teaching competence is a product of an adequate teacher education programme which must minimally include the recognition and the undertaking of the required class interactional moves. In order to evolve appropriate/adequate teacher education programme for communication skills teachers in Third World Anglophone States, there is the urgent need to undertake a comprehensive analyses of the needs of the communication skills teacher in order to develop appropriate

communication skills teacher needs profile. This profile can then be the basis for syllabus design and materials development needed for efficient and effective teacher education programmes.

A third implication of the findings in this study is that Teaching Competence can be displayed in the effective generation and utilization of appropriate classroom interactions. In other words, it is not enough to identify the relevant interactions that make for optimal and maximal learning; it is not enough to include the interactions in teacher education programmes so that teacher trainees can become aware of them, the method of presenting and utilising the interactions is also of vital importance. A good teacher education programme if it must succeed, must also address how the teachers are to be taught. In teaching the teachers, there is the need to adopt the workshop approach as well as collaborative teaching. The hindsights in this study has shown that the beehive of activities in the experimental classes was carefully planned and articulated. That is why discipline in the class did not break down. Before the students worked in groups, they were briefed carefully on what to do. Each student was free to cross check with the class teacher during activity periods on any issue. There was also a report session when the individual or the group secretary shared with the class the project or assignment carried out. Since this workshop and collaborative teaching were rewarding, there is every reason to believe that when teacher trainees are taught in a similar fashion, they will adopt the model used in teaching them. Besides, it is indeed a virtue for a teacher education department to always model what it perceives as good teaching practice (cf. Huck, 1989). Finally, there is a need to consider Onukaogu's (1990) 4P's RC teaching model which seeks to utilise the essential elements of

the curriculum process in the teaching of RC. The model also insists that RC teaching must of necessity integrate the other language skills for as Huck rightly observed:

> *In order to counteract the effect of many years of fragmented, passive listening, which characterised their previous schooling, education students need to experience whole, integrative teaching* (Huck, 1989:83)

The current disintegrative teaching of skills and Language components which informs current Communication Skills teaching in Nigeria and most Third World Anglophone States would continue if it is still adopted in teacher education programmes designed for communications skills teachers.

Conclusion

The success of any communication skills programme is to a large extent dependent on the teacher. As Welsh (1989) has observed:

> *When you get to the bottom line, teachers make or break a program. If they believe in what they are asked to do, if they are given opportunities to verbalize and resolve their professional conflict, if they are supported rather than dictated to by school leadership, and if they are sufficiently trained (underlining mine) the program will succeed* (p.65).

Furthermore if,

> *Teacher trainers, at all levels ... cultivate in their students an awareness and understanding not only of the crucial importance of Language Skills in the learning process but also of the complementary roles that English as a subject and English as a medium have to play in developing those skills.* (Wigzell, 1983, p. 12)

their teacher trainees would be able to acquire the teaching competence that would facilitate learning and teaching.

The position taken in this paper is that teachers are more likely to facilitate any communication skills programme they are involved in if they have the teaching competence to perform. There is therefore the

urgent need to implement paragraph 57 of the Nigerian National Policy on Education:

> *Teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education system can rise above its teachers* (NPE: p.37)

as it relates to the teaching of UOE in Third World Anglophone countries. It is only when this is done that the teaching competence of the communication skills teacher would be enhanced.

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